



PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION

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☀ Please call Daniel Rosen at MDP 410-767-4577 if you have any questions or comments.

Larry Hogan, Governor

Councilman Michael Leszcz, Chairman

Councilwoman Mary Kay Sigaty Vice Chairman

We, the Patuxent River Commission, envision a Patuxent River ecosystem as vital and productive in 2050 as it was in the 1950s. We therefore commit to be stewards and advocates for the Patuxent River and to lead and inspire actions to protect, enhance, and restore living resources and the natural, cultural, economic, and recreational values of the Patuxent River and its watershed.

MEETING SUMMARY

May 11, 2016

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Annapolis, MD

4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Members: Councilman Michael Leszcz (Chair), Honorable Mary Kay Sigaty (Vice-Chair), Meg Andrews, Alison Armocida, David Brownlee, Martin Chandler, Guy Curley, Andrew Der, Jack Fringer, Jim George, John Hartline, Honorable Mike Hewitt, Jim Hubbard, Scott Knoche as alternate for Kelton Clark, John McCoy, Mark Mendelsohn, Byron Petrauskas, Brenda Sanford as alternate for Steven Darcey, Jackie Takacs, Al Tucker

MDP Staff: Jason Dubow, La Verne Gray, and Daniel Rosen

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March meeting were approved. The Vice-Chair made the motion to approve; Al Tucker and John Hartline seconded the motion.

2016 Maryland General Assembly wrap-up

Mike Leszcz informed the Commission that SJ0001, the Commission's Policy Plan, was passed on the penultimate day of the legislative session.

Daniel Rosen reported on the Commission's bills of interest that passed the legislature. Of particular interest were the oyster study bill and the one to outlaw the use of neonicotinoid insecticide. Alison Armocida was asked who will pay for the oyster study, now that it's the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources; she replied that she hasn't heard what the plan is.

Mike Leszcz expressed his concern about septic systems: it's a problem if homeowners don't maintain the Best Available Technology (BAT). Who finds out if and when septic systems fail? Jack Fringer said that homeowners sign a contract to maintain the systems, but compliance is another thing. Mike

Leszcz agreed that the law is not enforced, and a change in ownership also leads to a lack of maintenance. Jim George said that inspections are put in a database, and landowners receive reminder letters when an inspection is due. Mike Hewitt asked if anyone actually shows up at the door and cautioned against state officials being too intrusive on private property. Mr. George replied that he does not know what the enforcement mechanism is. Jason Dubow recommended that the Commission let the Patuxent counties know that SJ0001 was adopted; the Commission supported the idea. Mike Leszcz said that Laurel would be sending out a press release. Andrew Der said an important wetland mitigation bill also passed; the bill creates incentives for wetland banking.

Patuxent River Wade-In on June 12 at Jefferson-Patterson Park & Museum

Mike Leszcz said he would talk to Senator Fowler about commercial sponsors for the future. What happens when the Senator is no longer with us? John Fringer agreed, adding that the event requires about \$3,000. Mr. Leszcz said that he would like a multi-year commitment from a sponsor. He added that he and the Vice-Chair would meet with the Senator after the June 12th Wade-In.

Jackie Takacs said that Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum (JPPM) does not want a reputation for being only an environmental park.

Boat Trip Options

Mike Hewitt suggested leaving from the Calvert Marine Museum so the Commissioners can see the steep erodible cliffs on the opposite shore. His own house above the cliff suffered from erosion, but he was not allowed to lessen it with the creation of terraces. A boat trip would raise awareness of the situation and possible remedies. The Chair noted that the City of Laurel implemented terraces but it was outside of the Critical Area. Forty people could fit on the boat, the fare would be free, and St. Mary's County could provide refreshments, perhaps at the Sea Breeze or Stoney's. Alison Armocida, who had worked on planning a boat trip earlier, said it was a good idea. Jason Dubow said that he and other staff would follow-up with Mr. Hewitt to begin the planning effort.

Staff support: Chesapeake Conservation Corps Application

Daniel Rosen said that he emailed the Commissioners to send him ideas for work that a Corps member could do, perhaps a project that they wanted to do but for which they never had the time. The 2016 Annual Action Plan could be used to refine a job description (including capstone project).

Mike Leszcz suggested that the CCC member could work on completing a park along the river between Laurel and Howard County. On the south side, the City of Laurel owns all but a small portion of the land along the river. Mary Kay Sigaty said that Howard County owns the land north of the river. Passive recreation is available now on the north side, with a path that runs to Laurel Racetrack. The land north of the path is mostly inaccessible. Perhaps a CCC member could work on a project to make the land accessible, create a park, and remove invasive species. The environment and local parks and recreation offerings would benefit.

Mr. Leszcz asked the Commissioners to submit other suggestions. Jason Dubow said that the tourism workgroup was looking at access to the river. Alison Armocida suggested that the Commission ask participants at the June 23rd Patuxent Conference for their ideas on projects that can be addressed by the CCC member. The participants are more likely to know where gaps exist and what would be useful to

them. David Brownlee said he would talk with the county parks staff regarding public access needs to inform a CCC application. After the meeting, La Verne Gray, staff to the tourism workgroup, and Martin Chandler submitted ideas to Mr. Rosen. He will compile the details in a table for later presentation to the Commission.

Public Access to the Little Patuxent River

Mary Kay Sigaty explained that along the Little Patuxent south of downtown Columbia runs a sewer easement that is already free of trees. The Columbia Association owns the land. The Association was working with Howard County to create a trail. One section of trail creation, however, has disappeared from the county's capital budget because residents there are opposed to having a trail behind their houses.

John McCoy said that opposition to the trail by a few prevents access to all, though access is the charge of the Association toward its land. Mary Kay Sigaty said that the trail would go to Savage and could eventually connect to Laurel. John McCoy added that the county and the Columbia Association would split the cost of building the trail. Mike Leszcz suggested revisiting the issue at the July meeting, when the county's budget would be further along. Ms. Sigaty said she would talk with the county executive and the Columbia Association to seek inclusion of funding for this project in next year's budget. The Commission did not object to her continuing her effort in this way or to Mr. McCoy communicating with the county regarding this issue.

Proposed Growth Tier Map Revision in Howard County

Mary Kay Sigaty informed the Commission that the county executive of Howard County wanted to change the tier map that was adopted before his election. Currently, Tier IV contains most of the Resource Conservation zone, but the county executive wants to open more Tier IV to development by changing the designation to Tier III. He would include in Tier IV only what is already preserved, plus small parcels that cannot develop more than four units. Virtually all the land drains to the Patuxent River. The change is part of the master plan review. The planning board opposed the proposal. Next it would go to the county council. The Commission was not asked to take any action on this issue.

Workgroup Updates

The Restoration and Preservation Workgroup reported that conference calls were scheduled with Anne Arundel and Montgomery Counties to discuss progress on their TMDLs and how the Workgroup can help.

Daniel Rosen said that the Scientific and Technical Workgroup encourages as many Commissioners as possible to take part in the 2016 Patuxent River Science Conference, June 23, at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), Edgewater, MD. See <http://www.paxcon.org/>. The scientists on the PRC can work with Commissioners who are not scientists to decide which presentations merit translation for the full Commission or further research for which the Commission can support funding.

La Verne Gray reported that the Tourism Workgroup is working on a map project to display tourist businesses and access points. They are ground-truthing and evaluating their information. There would be three travel itineraries on the map, for cultural, historical, and environmental resources. John

Hartline says that he has copies of the map. The Southern Maryland Consortium seems interested in it since it dovetails with what they are doing.

Sewage Spill Notification Workgroup: Jim George said that some recommendations are easier to implement than others—quicker communication, for example. He recommended that a stakeholder group come together to create standard operating procedures. The shellfish staff at MDE is looking into when to lift the closing of shellfish beds. Changes would need to go through the regulatory process.